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Newcastle
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**Creative Partnerships:
Creating purpose, permission
and passion for outdoor
learning in school grounds**

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2011



Creative Partnerships: Creating purpose, permission and passion for outdoor learning in school grounds

This review is based on evidence from four primary and first schools in north-east England, each of which has used the opportunities offered by Creative Partnerships to develop learning experiences in their school grounds. The motivations for initiating the work; the nature of learning; the use of the school environment and the relationships have been unique to each school, as have the physical, cognitive and affective outcomes. This publication explores the themes that have emerged across the case studies and illustrates them with evidence from each school.

The review was conducted between March and July 2011, during the final Creative Partnerships funding period.

The following schools participated in the project and we would like to thank them for their time and the openness with which they engaged with the review.

Farne Primary School, Newcastle
St Teresa's Catholic Primary School, Newcastle
Stobhillgate First School, Northumberland
Tweedmouth West First School, Northumberland

The key criteria for inclusion of the four schools in this review was that they had each prioritised the development of learning in the school grounds through the Creative Partnership project. The schools were self-selected through positive responses to introductory requests for engagement. In each school the focus of the review was to understand how and why they had developed their work, what the learning experiences were for pupils and teachers, and what the valued outcomes were. We were interested in how the work related to the wider curriculum and how the key participants had been engaged. We also explored the issues that emerged as the work progressed.

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Review Approaches

The review began with an interview undertaken with the Creative Partnerships co-ordinator in each school, in two cases this person was the headteacher. These interviews were semi-structured, based around common questions, but with scope for the development of discussions according to the nature of the responses. The interviews took place in the schools and were recorded and transcribed for analysis. They occurred at slightly different points in time in relation to the specific CP projects under review. The key themes explored were as follows:

- The role of Creative Partnerships in developing outdoor learning opportunities in the school, and the related activities.
- The participants (children and adults) in the relevant work and their roles, including the extent to which teachers were engaged

alongside Creative Practitioners and the nature of this within the curriculum.

- The intended outcomes of developing this type of learning experience, and why these had been prioritised.
- The progress and outcomes of the CP work to date and the plans for the initiative.

Each school provided documents (such as school development plans, schemes of work or project outlines) which demonstrated the nature of the CP work in relation to the wider school objectives. These have been reviewed to provide textual detail and background to the primary data.

In each case the school had taken photographs as a matter of course to record the experiences and learning outcomes. A selection of these photographs was made available to the review team, and from these a number

were chosen to form the basis of mediated interviews with small groups of pupils; typically groups of three pupils were interviewed together but there was a range from two to eight pupils depending upon the situation and availability in school. The format for this was based on that of Pupil Views Templates (PVTs) (Wall and Higgins, 2006) in that pupils were asked to discuss the situation that the photograph portrayed and to consider what would / might have been being said in that situation and what individuals might have been thinking / what was going on in their head at the time. Pupils recorded their responses and reflections in speech and thought bubbles positioned around the images. Some of the photographs included identifiable pupils – a number of whom were included in the interviews. Others were more process-related and specific individual pupils would not have been recognisable. The interviews were facilitated by a member of the research team who introduced the PVTs to participants and encouraged pupils to discuss their thoughts and recollections and record them on the template. If a participant was unable to write their comments down, as was the case with the youngest pupils, the researcher would do so. The researcher works to, and

within, BERA's (British Educational Research Association) Revised Ethical Guidelines for Educational Researchers (please see: <http://www.bera.ac.uk/files/2008/09/ethica1.pdf>). The nature of the research was explained to all participants, as it was their right to withdraw at any time. All participants gave positive consent to engage with the research and to having their anonymised comments and templates shared publically. In one school where the photographs were unavailable before the interviews, they were replaced by pupils' drawings of working outside.

In each school a number of teachers and teaching assistants who had been engaged in the project were also asked to reflect on their experiences as individuals. The prompts used for this were 'Plus, Minus, Interesting'; and the reflections were focused on outdoor learning, and working with Creative Partnerships practitioners.

Four schools: Case studies of Creative Partnerships Projects promoting outdoor learning

The development of teaching and learning facilitated by the engagement of creative practitioners and focusing on promoting learning in schools grounds is well illustrated by the four schools who participated in this review. They provide rich evidence of the motivations, processes and outcomes of such work. To set the scene for this review the relevant work in each school is summarised below. What becomes immediately obvious is that highlighting just one project, one outcome or even one period of time is inauthentic. These are projects which emerge over time, are rooted in, and inform development plans and will have long lasting effects, beyond the period of CP funding.

At Tweedmouth West First School Creative Partnerships funding has facilitated projects over three years. The intention has been to change teaching and learning with a particular focus on developing outdoor learning opportunities and stimulating pupil-led learning. In this school they were looking for opportunities which would take

children and teachers out of their ordinary routines, and which would be experienced as 'spectacular' events. Over the three years this has included developing activities in Howick Woods (beyond the school grounds), and creating what is known as 'The Village' within the grounds. This has become a focus for school and community events, including an annual family camp. In addition to the physical development of spaces the school has worked with practitioners to develop more open-ended and child initiated learning approaches and has been involved in creating performances rooted in local culture. Underpinning these activities has been the development of guidance and resources for an outdoor curriculum which has extended the 'spectacular' by enhancing teaching and learning routines.



Farne Primary School set out to explore what happened when they took learning opportunities outside. Does outdoor learning improve engagement and motivation; does it change attitudes to learning? Through their development they hoped to provide opportunities for both pupils and staff to be the 'best they can be'. Over three years the school has worked with pupils, parents, teachers and practitioners to radically transform their outside space into a number of areas for learning; some specific to key stages; some with a specific maths focus, an area of development for the school; and others with a more general usage. The school is committed to parental involvement and has used the Creative Partnerships projects to provide further opportunities for family learning. Teaching staff have embraced the opportunity to work with practitioners and have formed strong relationships with them that have directly impacted upon teaching practices, encouraging teachers to take risks and follow a more child-led, enquiry approach to learning.

St. Teresa's Catholic Primary School was able to integrate the Creative Partnerships projects with the development of its own Forest School. Through working with practitioners the outdoor classroom has been developed with an amphitheatre style space, bird hide, gazebo, allotment and prayer trail and is now used throughout the curriculum. Staff have appreciated working with artists and craftspeople on a long term basis, thereby allowing the creation of a bespoke programme for pupils planned in genuine collaboration between the teacher and practitioner. This school have focused on developing a creative curriculum, an aspect of which allows children to develop practical, craft skills in a problem-solving context. Other opportunities have engaged children in performance and film-making; drawing on the craft processes and exploiting the characteristics of the Forest School environment.



At **Stobhillgate First School** they sought to develop a more skills based, creative curriculum which would create opportunities that would jolt children out of classroom complacency and create memorable experiences for life. They also wanted to develop an outside space for use with an adjacent special school, who they now work with every Friday. The school have embraced working with a number of varied and experienced practitioners, with projects ranging from clothes making, creating a museum, exploring and learning about nature and scientific investigation. They have been inspired by practitioners and through working with a curriculum consultant have developed their curriculum, an experience they described as 'empowering'. Outdoor learning is now an integral part of school life with the expectation that each class will experience learning outdoors at least once a week.

Extending the learning environment

A common feature of each case study school was their desire to extend the physical learning environment and space available on a regular basis to the pupils and staff. Learning in the outdoors has gained favour in recent years in the primary context, particularly the Foundation Stage, but in some cases the ease with which school visits can be arranged and afforded has declined. In each of the four case study schools a significant focus has been the creative and environmental development of their own outdoor spaces. There is little that is predictable about how these spaces have been exploited, and each one now adds to the unique characteristics of the school as environments for learning and play. Examples of how the schools' outdoor learning environments have been developed were revealed in interviews with CP co-ordinators and during school visits. These included a museum created in a walkway connecting two buildings, an orchard, a fire-pit, a stage in the EYFS garden, a bird hide, a prayer trail, dry-stone walls and maths trails to name but a few.

Simply being and using the outdoors as a routine venue for learning was reported as transformational by a number of the staff reflecting on their recent experiences. The physical and spatial dimensions were regularly commented on; fresh air, space for pupils to move around and work in groups, the opportunity for more kinaesthetic and physical activities, the chance to work on a large scale and be 'really messy'. In addition, in every school at least one member of staff commented that pupils were more motivated to engage, and / or better behaved in outdoor sessions. For some pupils, the contrast between their classrooms and the outdoor spaces in school appears to be even more persuasive. There are frequent references to this contrast in their annotations to photographs (PVTs) gained during the focus groups. Being able to 'run around more', and enjoying the 'fresh air' were common comments. Some pupils indicated that they found the outdoors to be cooler, in comparison to indoors where they get too hot and are 'crammed into a classroom'. It is interesting that some pupils, from reception to Year 6, linked the space and fresh air to be able to learn and work better.

In terms of pupil behaviour, one teacher wrote that ‘children quickly understand the rules required to work in an outdoors setting and behaviour is not usually an issue’ and another stated that the children were ‘more enthusiastic, happier; they stay on task longer’. One pupil from Farne Primary School, wrote that, ‘I get hot when I am inside. I have to keep stopping and starting. It helps me to work when I am outside’. One teacher noted that some pupils who tended to be quiet in class opened up when outdoors. For another there was a sense that the outdoor space was an equalising influence, motivating ‘all children, including SEN, boys, girls and lower ability’ and allowing ‘non-academic [pupils] to shine’. It is clear that the outdoors provided an environment for pupils to take on different roles; for example, a teacher recalled an SEN pupil who had taken the lead in a bridge building task and the resulting effect on how others in the class subsequently viewed him.

Despite occasional references to the disruption caused by poor weather there was a strong sense that teachers and pupils alike had learned to value the qualities of the environment and in many ways helped to care for it or improve it.

Learning to dress for and be prepared for the weather conditions was noted as an advantage (including parents remembering to send pupils to school suitably clothed and equipped), and one teacher expressed some surprise that ‘it even worked in the rain!’. Many teachers describe the outdoor learning experience as ‘hands-on’; often relating this to specific activities (such as crafts or gardening), but sometimes in more general terms. Teachers reported that the outdoor environment offered more to listen out for (stimulating creative writing for example), that the grounds had been ‘explored’ for rocks and plants, children ‘got to use their senses’ and this was thought to encourage learning. On reflection one teacher recognised that ‘children spotted more than adults’. Pupils also highlighted this quality; one pupil stated that they ‘liked listening to the birds’ and another that they ‘could see as much colours as the rainbow’. In addition spending more time outdoors has triggered the development, maintenance and improvement of environmental features; such as the pond at St Teresa’s which was cleared of sludge and oil. Pupils at Farne recalled that they had gone outdoors to ‘to build dens for animals to live there and us to think and work’.

Frequently the purpose of the outdoor sessions was to engage in activities impossible in the classroom. In various ways the pupils, staff, parents and creative practitioners have enriched the school grounds by the development of physical spaces and facilities; and these enhanced spaces trigger further learning opportunities. The Tweedmouth West First School 'village' site has not just been a venue for the annual family camp, but the fire-pit (described as 'loved' by teachers and pupils) allows them to cook and eat school-grown produce outside. At St Teresa's children have assisted in the creation of habitats and crafting of dry-stone walls and sculptures. At Farne Primary maths trails have been created using artefacts designed by pupils and made using practitioners' expert skills, for example metal and woodworkings. At Stobhillgate an outside area has been developed for use with an adjacent special school who they now work with every Friday.

Valuing expertise and developing skills

Perhaps the most unique feature of the Creative Partnerships projects (both indoors and out) is the introduction of a wide range of practitioners to the schools. Across the four case study schools crafts people, musicians, artists, clothes-makers, dramatists, scientists, designers, environmental specialists, film-makers and writers have engaged with pupils and staff alike. While inevitably requiring considerable planning, co-ordination, collaboration and evaluation these partnerships between individuals and organisations is regarded as a significant bonus of the scheme, and there is evidence that these Creative Partnership schools will continue to look to fund such work in the future using their own or alternative resources. The expertise of the Creative Agents in helping to identify and match up potential Creative Practitioners with schools was also highly commended; one school co-ordinator noted that their school's Creative Agent not only recruited strong and diverse practitioners but also ensured they were well managed. School leaders, teachers, teaching assistants and pupils all recognised the value of the expertise offered by the practitioners, not simply as

the skills set they brought, but also in terms of their personalities, enthusiasm and willingness to engage in learning activities.

Children who had experienced the Creative Partnerships projects valued the 'special visitors' who helped them, and one stated that 'I like the teachers but it is nice to have different experiences'. The school CP co-ordinators are able to provide a broader perspective on the value of working with Creative Practitioners. It is clear from the interviews that, in addition to their deployment of specific skills in a learning context, the practitioners bring resources that teachers would not normally have access to or time to develop. This has clearly expanded the curriculum offer to pupils and enhanced teaching and learning for the duration of the project. The teachers and teaching assistants themselves extended this theme in their 'Plus, Minus, Interesting' responses. They reported that the 'trained and skilled' 'experts' offered children opportunities to produce work of excellence using quality materials. The rich experiences that they provided meant that children gained confidence as they tried out new skills with practitioner support and then more independently. In

one school a significant reported outcome was that children had realised that it was possible to make a living in a range of interesting ways.

As significant as having specific skills Creative Practitioners were variously described as 'inspirational', having 'unbelievable insight' and were recognised as having challenged the school staff members' expectations of pupils and encouraged them to work in a different way with their children. As indicated below, these qualities had a knock-on effect on engagement and opened up opportunities for curriculum development and staff CPD.

‘Letting go’ and developing pedagogy and curriculum

There is strong evidence that both in intention and outcomes the Creative Partnerships profiled in this report have promoted the development of an alternative concept in relation to teaching and learning. The school co-ordinator at Stobhillgate First School, for example, indicated that their involvement with Creative Partnerships was planned to create ‘new dimensions to teaching and learning’, which included more child-initiated and more skills-based learning. At Tweedmouth West First School the co-ordinator recognised that the teachers had overcome their anxieties and been able to ‘go with the flow’, to follow the children’s ideas and interests. In the same way that the work had given children new confidence, this experience seems to be rubbing-off on some staff, giving them greater confidence to ‘let go’. At this school a common response from teaching staff was the significance of working across year groups and the alternative and collaborative modes of planning and teaching that this helped them to develop. At Farne Primary the headteacher spoke of how practitioners had introduced an enquiry approach to

designing the outdoor spaces, engaging pupils and parents in designing the space, ‘We have had a lot of fun and worked with various practitioners who took us on a very different journey to the journey we would have done ourselves’. Such approaches were reported as having inspired teachers and given them the confidence to incorporate child initiated learning into their own practice; methods which the headteacher believed engaged children as ‘they feel they are being listened to’.

On a more concrete level the outdoor learning environment had engaged pupils and staff with alternative curriculum content. The development of skills introduced by the practitioners was one aspect of this. A second dimension was the opportunity (as one teacher noted) ‘to cover things we wouldn’t cover in class’. These including planting and growing food, building a min-beast hotel, learning first hand about wildlife habitats, making large-scale structures, and using ‘natural learning’ to improve science understanding. Even activities that feature more routinely in teaching and learning seemed to develop greater resonance outdoors. It is difficult to tell whether this was the result of using the outdoor environment or the Creative

Practitioners' ability to encourage learning through real world 'problems' and experiences. Examples of such activities included literacy and numeracy, design and construction, song-writing and composition, drama and dance and film-making. The CP coordinator at St. Teresa's spoke of the unexpected development and impact of leadership and organizational skills of pupils engaged in the film crew that had been carried through to group work in lessons and noted by class teachers. Farne Primary have further reported a significant improvement in their recent EYFS profile calculation levels, despite the overall academic ability of previous classes being similar; a result that they believe has been achieved through engaging young children in maths through real life applications in the outdoor environments.

Pupil engagement and learning

The most over-whelming impression given by and about the pupils in relation to Creative Partnerships projects using outdoor spaces was of enthusiasm and fun. Many pupils recalled specific activities which they had enjoyed participating in as illustrated below (and as indicated by the number of exclamation marks they used).

'I enjoyed getting to learn the different trees and what to do when lost'

'I was hitting the target and I won. I was having fun'

'We have gardening club and when we grow things we pick them and eat them!!! We also have loads of tasks to do outside!!!'

'I like designing things'

'Cool! This is fun'

'We don't do this that often. It's like a treat'

'It's fun to do stuff we've never done before'

These comments were backed up by teachers, one of whom stated that it was 'great to see children doing things out of

their comfort zone and having a great time'. At Stobhillgate First School, the headteacher felt that pupils were 'jolted out of their classroom complacency'. The active nature of learning appeared to motivate pupils. One teacher wrote that pupils were more 'aware and alert'.

Teachers and teaching assistants reported other aspects of pupil engagement facilitated through the projects. At Farne Primary School for example the co-ordinator noted that pupils had enjoyed working with children of different ages and that some pupils took on unexpected roles (such as a pupil with SEN who led the bridge building task); while the activities had helped the class 'gel'. The inclusive nature of activities was frequently identified as a key attribute. At Tweedmouth West School, one teacher's PMI response indicated that there was 'a part for everyone', that 'all children were involved', and that it met 'different learning styles.' At the same school the CP co-ordinator noted that their 'village' project had particularly engaged the 'difficult to reach children'. The social aspects of pupils' engagement were frequently noted by teachers, such as in one school where a teacher noted that pupils helped each other with resources

allowing them to work independently in the outdoor sessions, and in another where the learning experiences had supported progress in speaking and listening.

In this environment in which pupils were often highly engaged specific learning outcomes were noted. This was achieved as the projects created opportunities for children to ask more questions and that in response the practitioners were able to probe children's ideas to extend their thinking. One teacher believed that this was because the projects gave pupils a sense of purpose. A pupil at Tweedmouth West First School appreciated the fact

that 'we ask questions about the topic'. At Farne Primary School, the headteacher indicated that the more open-ended learning approach had engaged children, who had felt they were being listened to; and that the teachers had been able to watch what children wanted to do to extend their learning and acknowledged that this was not what they as teachers might have planned for.

Pupils' comments indicated the significance of problem-solving and undertaking practical tasks that they could master with effort. At Farne Primary School one year 1 pupil stated that 'I thought I couldn't do it but I did it. I had to



I wondered how did the stone go together without cement?
Stones can make a hard wall with no cement if you put them in the right place.

How are we going to sit on the wall without it collapsing?
Why do you have to wear gloves? To protect our hands.

I liked working with different people.
How long is it till we can sit on it?

The coke bottle is so we know how high to do it.
I like listening to the birds.

throw the ball at the monkey to see how many I could get'; while at St Teresa's Catholic Primary School one pupil indicated that he 'eventually got the hang of' the craft he was practicing. Pupils engaged in problem solving and developing craft skills were readily able to identify what they were trying to learn; describing, for example, the nature of the practical problem they were trying to solve, technical steps in specific craft

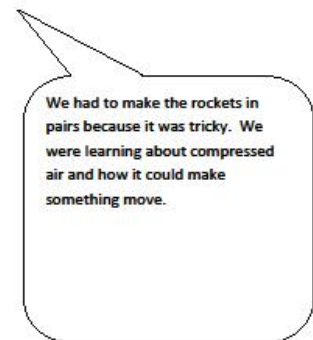
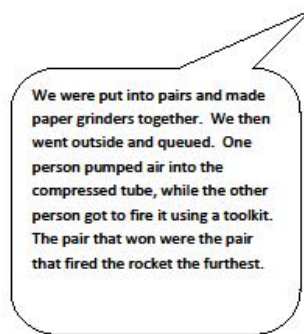
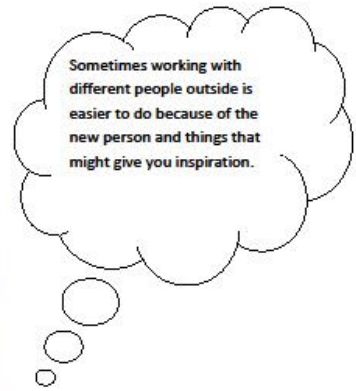
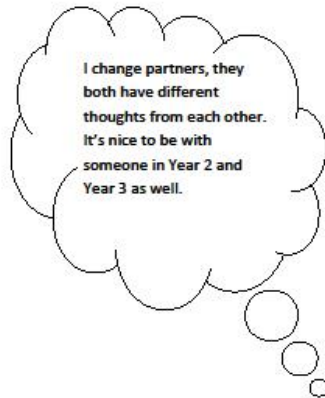
skills, specific number processes in numeracy or the need to communicate with each other to complete a task successfully. Below is an example of a Pupil Views Template used at St. Teresa's, comments from a number of pupils have been merged on one template to display the type of comments recorded in the speech and thought bubbles.

Developing relationships for learning

The accounts above suggest that one outcome of the CP work has been the extension of relationships for learning; pupils working with peers in different year groups, and schools, teachers collaborating with Creative Practitioners to plan and facilitate projects, and pupils learning with adult experts visiting their school. The significance of these enhanced and extended working relationships is both in the extent to which they allow for successful outcomes to projects; and also in the extent to which they develop the sense of ownership and community-involvement in relation to learning. In contrast to the more frequent involvement of 'others' in extra-curricular activities, these CP projects illustrate the value of involving 'others' in curriculum development initiatives. One significant group in this is parents; and in several of the case study schools their involvement was an important component of the projects. At Farne Primary School for example, the headteacher revealed that despite the school's long history of parental involvement, watching the children escort their parents around first the Scotswood nature garden, and later the school Maths Trail, had been pivotal moments. At St Teresa's Catholic Primary School an important outcome was the pride shown by the pupils during a

screening of their film for parents. Similarly, at Tweedmouth West the development of 'The Village' and now annual family camp has been pivotal in encouraging Dads into school, some of whom had never visited the school before. In earlier years campers were engaged in helping to develop the site, whilst later on the opportunity was used to involve families in working with one of the practitioners with full scale silhouettes made of families and displayed around Berwick. Pupils reflecting in their PVTs were enthusiastic about such opportunities with their Dads and older siblings.

The most significant 'new' relationship created by these projects was between the schools and the Creative Practitioners. As already indicated real value was attributed to the skills and demeanours of the practitioners involved; one teacher wrote that they were 'lovely, lovely people'. These qualities helped to develop experiences of 'joint enterprise' as practitioners checked out their ideas with pupils and staff, and the opportunity for 'quality dialogue' created an environment in which participants were more confident to take risks. It should not be assumed that developing successful projects was unproblematic. It was the case that all participants had to develop skills of negotiation and gain an understanding of the other participants' perspectives and intentions. As one co-ordinator noted, the



work had created a 'learning journey for all'. Pupils, too, appreciated the involvement of the practitioners, as one wrote 'having a grown up is a bit easier', and their teachers sensed that they had gained a great deal from working with a range of other adults and potential role-models.

Also of significance to the children was the opportunity to work with each other. For example, pupils identified working with children in other year groups as an enjoyable feature. One reception pupil at Tweedmouth West stated that she 'like[d] working with Year 4. Gracie played with me', a pupil at Stobhillgate First School wrote that 'we showed year 3 and 4 what we did and they

showed us their activity'. Working with peers to solve problems also featured frequently in pupils' comments, as displayed in the PVT from Stobhillgate below (as before comments from a number of pupils have been amalgamated). Pupils showed that they were prepared to guide and support each other, and appreciated the ideas that were offered during group work. Similarly, teachers reported that team-teaching with their colleagues had been enjoyable, leading to opportunities for development which are explored below.

Building staff capacity

The characteristics of the Creative Partnerships projects already described illustrate the range of opportunities they offer for staff development. This has been the result of both strategic planning, for example to co-ordinate CPD alongside CP projects, and the access to new ideas which have been taken back into the school. Engagement in the projects *per se* also appeared to stimulate staff learning. The headteacher at Farne Primary School said that the work had 'added sparkle to teachers' and that they were 'empowered' by following their own and the children's interests to support the development of teaching and learning within the projects.

The relative fluidity of many of the CP projects demanded more flexible approaches to teaching and learning. Teachers often commented on this aspect; one at Tweedmouth West First School wrote that the outdoor learning CP projects made 'the staff think how to do things more creatively / in a different way', while the co-ordinator there stated that the teachers find it harder to work in this way, and that 'the only way to do it is to keep doing it and get better at it'. The value of the CP projects in this respect is the permission that they give for greater experimentation and more open planning. It was seen as critical that while Creative Practitioners offered new approaches to

developing learning experiences, teachers brought their knowledge of pupils and expertise of the curriculum to the table. In addition some co-ordinators and teachers noted the importance of the school's senior leadership in providing reassurance that working in this was being promoted and supported. It was suggested by one co-ordinator that the fact that teachers were participants in the planning and teaching and learning, rather than experiencing the projects as something 'done to them' is more likely to lead to teacher learning and sustained impact after the end of the projects.

Teacher development was frequently very practical, such as taking away new approaches, learning behaviour management techniques from colleagues with whom they were team-teaching, and teachers developing skills from practitioners that could be transferred into their own teaching. Some development could also be described as conceptual; changing the way that something is understood or seen. By taking different roles in the learning environment, for example being able to closely observe small groups of pupils, teachers and TAs reported that they had gained unique insights which they could translate into their own work. Teachers became learners alongside the pupils; they recognised the significance of the

opportunities for reflection on their normal practices that the CP partnerships had offered. They shared their frustrations (such as lack of musical knowledge) and the goals that these experiences had given them and how these might impact on their teaching at a later date. One CP co-ordinator summed this up as teachers having more 'open minds' in addition to their 'new ideas'. It was also evident that the experience had triggered discussion amongst staff about the relative importance of some of their established customs (such as relying on pupils' written work as evidence of learning) and new routines (such as the more relaxed start to each day that the new outdoor learning space created).

School improvement

With opportunities for staff development, and the chance to re-imagine aspects of the curriculum and to enact pedagogic change it is no wonder that in each of the four case study schools engagement with Creative Partnerships was associated with school improvement. In all schools the decision to engage with Creative Partnerships was, at least in part, taken to foster or sustain school improvement, and in each case there was evidence that this had been successful. The fact that the initiative demanded an evaluative dimension also supported school self-evaluation and improvement planning.

At Farne Primary School the headteacher stated that their aspiration was for the children and teachers alike to be the best they can be and that the work had added and enriched the experience of staff and children in school and inspired them to reach out to the community. At Tweedmouth West First School they had aimed (and succeeded) in using CP to do ‘something big and exciting that would not otherwise happen in the school’ and that they were ‘not prepared to settle for second best’. The co-ordinator there stated that a success of their work has been that as a whole school they were now ‘thinking along the same lines’ and that ‘every-one is on board’. One teacher noted even ‘parents seem to have come round to it’

and that there was now a ‘different vibe in school’. The co-ordinator at St Teresa’s described how the CP projects were linked to related school agendas, such as work as a Forest School and with the Woodland Trust. She indicated that the CP projects were not seen as one-off events, but part of an integrated curriculum development. One of the teachers at St Teresa’s Catholic Primary School also noted that a benefit of the CP projects was that they were bespoke for the school, and as such were especially tailored to meet the needs of the school at that time. At Stobhillgate First School the headteacher stated that they had required a fearlessness to bring about change, and recognised the outcomes of their recent Ofsted inspection had been helpful in developing that culture.

When looking ahead, co-ordinators in the four case study schools were able to describe their directions of travel and relate these to the Creative Partnerships work. Co-ordinators in two schools highlighted their desire to work to support other schools in developing creative and outdoor curriculum, and each one stated that they would be seeking ways to continue to engage with expert practitioners using their own budget or through seeking alternative external funding. In one school a new curriculum plan is being developed with the support of a curriculum consultant introduced to them through Creative Partnerships; and in another there

was a strong desire to build on the existing relationships with specific practitioners. Without the CP funding it was acknowledged that the pace of change might slow, and that the schools themselves would have to do considerably more ground work; but the staff and pupils were left in no doubt that this was an investment worth making.

Emerging themes

Drawing on the experiences of teachers and pupils in these four case study schools allows some generalisations to be offered. A key emerging theme is that while the schools have engaged in unique projects they each recognise that the projects have provided an impetus for a reconsideration of the processes of teaching and learning. The Creative Partnerships projects focusing on the outdoor environment have certainly offered opportunities for fun and memorable learning experiences, but the impact goes deeper than this. Teachers and co-ordinators recognise that they have had the chance to develop alternative approaches and to explore alternative perspectives on both pedagogy and the curriculum. One way of understanding this is through the distinction between convergent and divergent teaching (Pryor & Crossouard, 2008). Much of the teaching and learning developed through these case study projects could be described as divergent. Divergent teaching is contingent and cannot be planned fully in advance. It does not rely on a 'script', but instead requires a degree of risk taking and thinking on one's feet. In these examples it is clear that teaching staff and creative practitioners have, to a greater or lesser extent, responded to the pupils' interests and actions. The collaborative relationship between teachers and creative practitioners

has supported this; allowing more child-initiated learning and an approach which encourages experiential learning.

In September 2001, Estyn (the Welsh equivalent to Ofsted) produced an evaluation report on the national foundation stage initiative for greater outdoor learning. Their findings have resonance with this review. For example their report states that, 'In most cases, children benefit from their time outdoors. They display high levels of engagement and enjoyment and their knowledge and understanding of the world and physical development improve. A majority of practitioners also say that children's behaviour, physical fitness and stamina improve' (Estyn, 2011, p5). The Estyn report recognises that opportunities to enhance learning outcomes linked to creativity have not been fully realised in their sample of outdoor learning, and the Creative Partnership schools in this review do provide illustrative examples of how this might be achieved.

Lawrence Stenhouse (1975) was unequivocal in rejecting a view of teaching and learning which stated that the only way to organize the curriculum was to divide teaching programmes into pre-specified outcomes in terms of measurable changes in student behaviour. He argued for the transformation of the teacher-pupil relationship. In such a transformation there

has to be a redrawing of roles, responsibilities and power implying a less authoritarian structure. Such a transition can be recognised in the four case study schools, with the introduction of creative practitioners as 'experts' and evidence of teachers learning skills alongside pupils, of pupils learning from pupils and opportunities for family involvement in learning activities. There is also evidence that teachers welcomed the opportunities for their pupils to surprise them, and celebrated both the intended and unintended learning outcomes and consequences.

The same could be said of the development of teaching staff. In each case the co-ordinators were able to identify tangible, but not always planned for, staff development outcomes. The teachers themselves had overcome some of their anxieties about 'letting go' and enjoyed the chance to work across year groups, to take alternative roles in supporting and engaging in learning, and to draw on the expertise of practitioners who reciprocated by drawing out their expertise as teachers. Traditionally schools and teachers find change difficult (Tyack & Cuban, 1995, Leat, 1999) especially in the direction of more innovative pedagogies. Substantial pedagogic innovation usually requires some behavioural change in teaching and therefore also changes in thinking and in beliefs about pupils, learning or teaching – and perhaps all three. There is

good evidence that the Creative Partnerships projects have created the space and permission for some of these changes to start to occur. In this environment teachers and pupils have responded positively to what they recognise as more fluid teaching approaches, often driven by the 'natural' processes adopted by practitioners based on craft skills, experimentation, or exploration of ideas, environments and techniques. Leadership, effective co-ordination and permissions; have all been critical. This was also a conclusion reached by Estyn (2001) who found that the 'vision of leaders and their commitment to making the best use of outdoor learning are key factors' (p5). Where scepticism of the value of outdoor learning was found in the Welsh sample the outdoor environment was not used well enough. One of the significant characteristics of the Creative Partnerships sample in this report was that such scepticism (if it had existed) had been largely overcome and thus real progress was being made in developing appropriate teaching and learning in the enhanced outdoor areas of each school.

In Timperley et al.'s (2007) 'best evidence synthesis' study of effective professional development (as measured by student outcomes) , one of the most important factors implicated in teacher learning was the challenge to the existing beliefs that are embedded in the everyday discourse of some

schools, usually that certain groups of students could not learn as well as other groups. There is evidence from the case study schools that transferring learning to the outdoor environment, and taking alternative approaches to planning, enacting and valuing learning has allowed some teachers' assumptions to be challenged. In this environment each school has evolved as a community; with new elements of school improvement planning being developed and plans being made for further innovative approaches. The experience of Creative Partnership projects has helped each school to recognise that the value in innovation is not simply in adopting one new approach after another. They have learned that they can enrich the curriculum through exploiting multiple opportunities for learning, extending relationships for learning and recognising a very wide range of outcomes of learning.

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